

**MIDDLE ATLANTIC
Region 1
HHS-N-276-2011-00003-C
Consumer Health Outreach to Older Adults: Health
Literacy Training
Syosset Public Library
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Approaches and Interventions Used.....	4
Evaluation Activities.....	5
Problems or Barriers Encountered.....	6
Continuation Plans.....	7
Impact.....	8
Lessons Learned.....	9
Other.....	10
Attachment 1 – AR summary data: Subcontractor activities.....	11

Executive Summary

The Consumer Health Outreach to Older Adults: Health Literacy Training in the Syosset Public Library and Local Senior Housing Complexes projects goal was to develop an educational program to train older adult patrons to use computers and the internet to access and use health information. The objectives of the project were: (1) to teach older adults about and assist them in the use of the rich online information resources to meet their daily health information needs, (2) to adapt existing information training resources developed by the NLM and NIH for use by the library in training of older adults, and (3) to increase the impact of the rich and authoritative online health resources of the NLM and NIH. Additionally, it was the goal of this outreach to provide consumer friendly health information to those who are unwilling or unable to obtain that information for themselves. In addition it was our goal to improve the health literacy, specifically but not limited to, heart health of the 50+ demographic within the community and adjoining areas by teaching them how to evaluate the information that they encounter for its authority, currency, bias, and purpose, stressing the older adult friendly NIH Senior Health and excellent consumer friendly information available from MedlinePlus.

Due to increased demand for personalized consumer health research in April 2011 the Syosset Public Library created a health Reference Center with the goal to provide patrons with the best sources for locating reliable health and medical information. In the six months since the inception of the center 99.23% of the queries emanated from adults 50 years and over all of whom indicated a preference for a face to face reference interview. In Nassau County, the highest rate of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular mortality is in Woodbury (zip code 11797), nearly three times higher than the rate for Nassau County as a whole. Woodbury also has the highest rates of cardiovascular disease hospitalizations in Nassau County.

Within Woodbury there are three senior housing complexes that provide housing for over four hundred older adults. There is a significant barrier to the portion of the senior population that is unable or unwilling to walk or drive to the library as there is no public transportation available to the residents of these communities that reaches the library. The preference for face to face interviews combined with the lack of access to the library was the seed for this outreach project.

The Syosset Public Library reached out to the boards of all three senior housing projects to offer training within the respective communities as well as the local office of the American Heart Association and Mercy Medical Center in order to provide informational programming for patrons and staff.

Training sessions focused on heart health and evaluating health information on the Internet were scheduled within the senior housing community and the library. Via this initiative the library was able to gain access to 91 individuals that had not been able to reach the library or had not heard about the Health Reference Center. The Health Reference Librarian was able to interact with all participants. Verbal feedback as well as collection of an evaluation form was gathered for review. Overall the project was well received and there have been numerous requests for further programming.

Minority Populations Served

African Americans: No

American Indians/Alaska Natives: No

Asian Americans: No

Hispanics/Latinos: No

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders: No

Other: No

Approaches and Interventions Used

The objectives of the project were: (1) to teach older adults about and assist them in the use of the rich online information resources to meet their daily health information needs, (2) to adapt existing information training resources developed by the NLM and NIH for use by the library in training of older adults, and (3) to increase the impact of the rich and authoritative online health resources of the NLM and NIH. Additionally, it was the goal of this outreach to provide consumer friendly health information to those who are unwilling or unable to obtain that information for themselves. In addition it was our goal to improve the health literacy, specifically but not limited to, heart health of the 50+ demographic within the community and adjoining areas by teaching them how to evaluate the information that they encounter for its authority, currency, bias, and purpose, stressing the older adult friendly NIH Senior Health and excellent consumer friendly information available from MedlinePlus.

The Health Reference Librarian met with the boards of three of the senior housing complexes in order to gain access to their respective club houses and residents. She was able to schedule periodic visits to two of the three senior housing complexes to assist residents with health related searching, and to provide health literacy classes focusing on the rich and authoritative resources of MedlinePlus and NIH Senior Health.

The Health Reference Librarian entered into a programming partnership with the American Heart Association to educate staff members about stress and its affect on the heart with the added benefit of enlisting them as ambassadors of the Health Reference initiative, sending them out into the community to garner interest in the program.

The Health Reference Librarian scheduled a "Healthy Heart" program held at the Syosset Public Library. The presenter was Dr. Thierry Duchatellier, Section Chief of Cardiology at Mercy Medical Center.

Along with printed publicity the Healthy Heart Program was publicized on the Health Reference blog

<http://splhealth.wordpress.com/2012/02/10/healthy-heart-program-at-the-syosset-public-library/>

Evaluation Activities

Given the nature of the outreach proposed quantitative results consisted mainly of attendance number for programs planed. The total attendance at programs was 91. Qualitative results consisted of responses to evaluation forms provided to attendees. The evaluation form gathered data on the attendee's opinion of the informative nature of the class or program, the clarity of the information provided, the organization of presented material, and the confidence level of their skill after having taken the class or attending the program. There was additional space for attendee's comments and suggestions. Out of the 91 evaluation forms we received 41 responses (45.05%). Overall the respondents gave the all of the programs 4's and 5's (Strongly Agree) to all of the questions. Two respondents gave feedback indicating that a hands on session would be beneficial. Given that the outreach proposal was a pilot project we are pleased with the response, and feel that our initial goals and objectives have been met. The positive response from patrons and requests for further programming will ensure that the program will continue and hopefully expand.

Problems or Barriers Encountered

There were two major problems faced.

1) In attempting to navigate the political structure of the senior housing communities the Health Reference Librarian experienced reluctance to allow the project to be held in the clubhouse of one of the communities. The board cited a fear of lawsuit because of the health nature of the program. The Health Reference librarian reworked the proposal to clarify the informational nature of the outreach, and reiterated the Syosset Public Library Health Reference disclaimer [The purpose of the Syosset Public Library's Health Reference Center is to provide public access to a wide range of health and medical information, not to give medical advice or interpretation. The Syosset Public Library does not endorse any specific product, service, or treatment. Do not consider any information received from the Syosset Public Library as medical advice. Never delay or disregard seeking professional medical advice from your doctor or other qualified healthcare providers. You should always speak with your doctor before you start, stop, or change any prescribed part of your care plan or treatment. Information received from the Syosset Public Library is never a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment from a qualified healthcare provider. Please note that these services are being provided by librarians and NOT medical doctors.] At this point permission was granted.

2) One of the senior housing complexes could not agree as to who would be responsible for the program. The Health Reference Librarian spoke to members of the board to attempt to gain permission for the program. Each time she was told to contact yet another member of the board. In the end it was decided that a member of the community was the correct individual to coordinate the request. After numerous failed attempts by the Health Reference librarian to contact this individual the Health Reference librarian contacted the president of the board and was again referred to the aforementioned community member. At this time the Health Reference Librarian sent another letter outlining the proposal and included her contact information. No reply was received

Continuation Plans

Due to what we deemed an overwhelming response to the need for this type of program in the community we anticipate that this project will continue going forward. After each Healthy Web surfing program (in house, and as outreach) the Health Reference librarians' interactions with patrons indicated that they found the program helpful and important, and that they would stress this with community members that were not in attendance.

The Health Reference librarian intends to continue reaching out to the various senior housing communities and hopes to broaden the scope to include community centers and houses of worship. We have partnered successfully with Mercy Medical Center and plan on offering various health related programming focused on, but not exclusively, heart health. Given the aging population of the Syosset/Woodbury community and the high rate of cardiovascular disease and mortality we believe the continuation of the project is vital. The Syosset Public Library is committed to the project and will provide the funds and staff in order to move the project forward. It is our hope that with future additional funding that we will be able to add a hands on component to supplement the lecture portion of the presentations.

Impact

This project enabled the Health Reference librarian to gain access to older adults living in senior housing that would not have been able to reach the library for an in-house presentation. After the last presentation the Health Reference librarian spent 45 minutes providing personal web surfing tips with attendees. All participants approached the librarian in order to convey their appreciation for reaching out to them as well as expressing their desire for "more programs like this."

The response from participants was so positive that the Health Reference librarian decided, because of ease of scheduling, to add a well attended, presentation in-house. It is our plan to offer these programs periodically to attempt to reach as many older adults as possible.

All of the presentations allowed the Health Reference librarian to publicize the Health Reference services offered by the Syosset Public Library. This increased our visibility both in the community and in the library.

The presentations focused mainly on the rich and authoritative online resources of the NLM and NIH in particular NIH Senior Health and MedlinePlus. The majority of attendees (by show of hands) did not know anything about either MedlinePlus or NIH Senior Health. When asked where they searched for health related information the usual response was "the Internet" with some mentioning WebMD and the Mayo Clinic. The Health Reference librarian stressed that when she was beginning any search she always begins with MedlinePlus the gold standard for consumer health information. The timing of the final presentation coincided nicely with the changes made to the NIH Senior Health website update. The Health Reference librarian updated her presentation to highlight the search box and other changes made to the site.

It is our hope that given time to reflect the Health Reference librarian will be able to share her experiences regarding this awarding opportunity with her colleagues either by presenting at a local conference and/or writing an article.

Lessons Learned

The most difficult aspect of the program was gaining access to the three senior housing communities. Initial reluctance on the part of one of the three communities resulted in a significant time delay. While the program did eventually come to fruition the short (Dec. to April - additionally there was a short window of time between notification of the potential award and acceptance) time period of the award was of great concern. The political structure of one of the senior housing communities made it impossible schedule any outreach. Ideally there would have been more time available to begin to set things in place and reach out to the senior housing communities.

We are pleased with the outcome of the program, but would if given the opportunity add a hands on component to supplement the lecture portion of the presentations. The Healthy Web Surfing presentation was adapted from a currently available program from "NIH Module Nine Tool Kit for Trainers." This tool kit utilized a hands on presentation and it is felt that this would be an effective approach. The senior housing communities do not have computer labs the Syosset Public Library Health Reference Librarian had to rely on lecture alone with the offer of one on one lessons. If given more funding we would like to be able to purchase laptops and make them available to participants.

Other

<http://splhealth.wordpress.com/2012/02/10/healthy-heart-program-at-the-syosset-public-library/>

<http://splhealth.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/healthy-web-surfing-presentation/>

Attachment 1: AR summary data: Subcontractor activities